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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Microbiology
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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94143

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Dr. Jon Beckwith
Department of Microbiology
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Harvard Medical School
25 Shattuck Street
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Jon:

Many thanks for your letter and invitation. Under different circumstances, I'd love to participate; not only have I followed the AIDS story closely - for pedagogical purposes, as an advisor to Chiron, and as a retrovirologist - but I've been involved politically as chairman of a committee to find a suitable name for the AIDS virus. So I have had more than one interaction with the press already.

However, there are two main problems: I will be in the midst of lecturing in our virology course, and I am committed to a trip East nine days later. And, of course, there is the matter of money. So I think I had better say no.

Your program looks excellent. (I was pleased to see a colleague of my wife's - David Ansley from the Mercury News - on the schedule.) I do have one suggestion: Colin Norman of Science whose account of the virus-related politics was exemplary. To add someone in science who has followed things closely you might try John Coffin, a retrovirologist at Tufts (an articulate member of our nomenclature committee, but not working on AIDS) or an academic clinician, like Ken MacIntosh.

Best wishes,

Harold E. Varmus, M.D.
American Cancer Society
Professor of Molecular Virology

HEV/jm